

# California M E D I C I N E

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## EDITORIALS

### A New Problem for C.P.S.

California newspapers blasted out in righteous indignation late last month when they discovered, via *Time* magazine, that a few physician members of California Physicians' Service had been apprehended in calculated plans to withdraw from C.P.S. funds more than they were rightfully entitled to. The *Time* story, in turn, was taken from an editorial, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," that appeared in the March 6, 1952, issue of the *Bulletin* of the Los Angeles County Medical Association.

Thus a sincere attempt to clear up a sore spot within the confines of the medical family broke into public print, with overtones not too flattering to the medical profession. The ordinary machinery of the county and state organizations, capable of dealing with a problem of this nature, was interrupted in its normal procedure.

Many physicians have since asked themselves what profits it if they adhere to an organization of their own making, with a vast potential for economic and legislative good, if some of their fellows make that organization a private province for their own financial gain. The question comes naturally and deserves an answer.

The answer lies in the fact that C.P.S. has awakened to a realization that some of its professional members have not shot square; once that fact is established, the remedy is obvious. Publicity within the ranks of the profession itself, in this case through a county society bulletin, is bound to have a salutary effect on some of the erring brothers. More stringent remedies are available if that one does not work effectively. Meanwhile, it should be pointed out that the financial loss, if any, is on the shoulders of the other professional members of C.P.S., not those of the public. Where a small number of physicians take it upon themselves to raid a pooled fund, there is that much less left in the fund to pay the vastly larger number of participating doctors who bill honestly for their services. Ergo, a reduced unit value.

Certainly, in the course of the investigation that C.P.S. undertook nearly a year ago, with the knowledge and consent of the C.M.A., cases will be uncovered where there is overcharging because of ignorance of procedures or a lack of study of the proper way to assemble a statement under the C.P.S. program. Clerical errors may account for additional cases. These are subject to clarification and adjustment.

In the other cases, the few where flagrant abuses amounting to outright dishonesty are disclosed, the county medical societies and subsequently perhaps governmental authorities may see fit to take active steps. We need not list here the various punishments or penalties that might be imposed; suffice it to say that physicians guilty of such conduct cannot expect to have the charges lightly dismissed. Under all the rules of the game, including the law, the principles of medical ethics and the rules of common sense and fair play, those guilty of such abuses should be brought to the proper bar of justice, preferably by their fellow practitioners.

### The Annual Session

Soon the 1952 Annual Session of the California Medical Association will convene in Los Angeles. Members of the Association and their guests will again be able to concentrate in a few days' time a real postgraduate course which is not easily produced and is seldom matched.

This year the meeting will honor an outstanding list of guest speakers, will house the largest number of technical and scientific exhibits ever assembled by the C.M.A. and will welcome what promises to be the largest registration in the organization's history.

In pride mixed with rue it must be reported that the Association's annual meetings have now grown to the size where it is becoming increasingly difficult to find quarters adequate to house them. Still, hotel accommodations are available and all are welcome.